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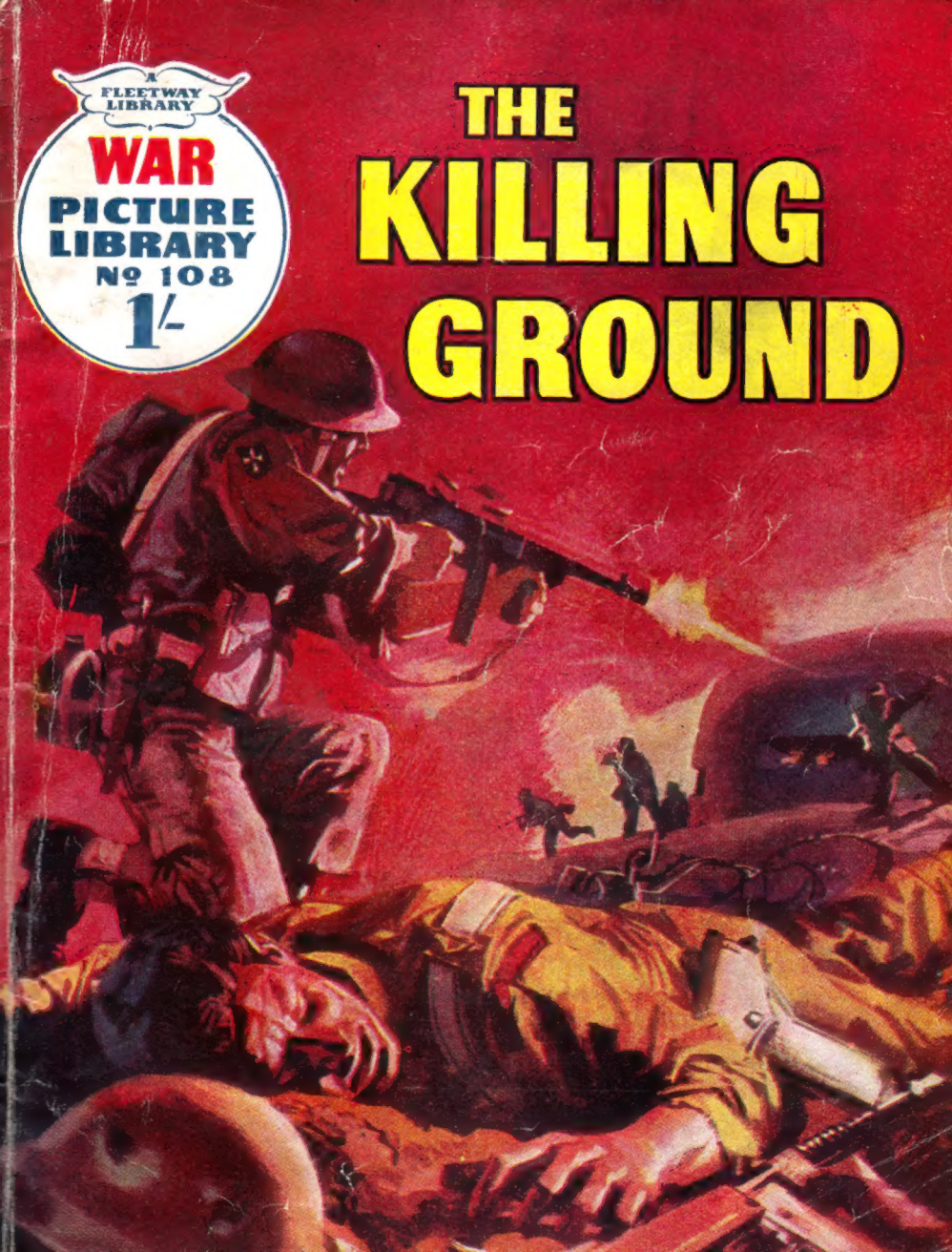

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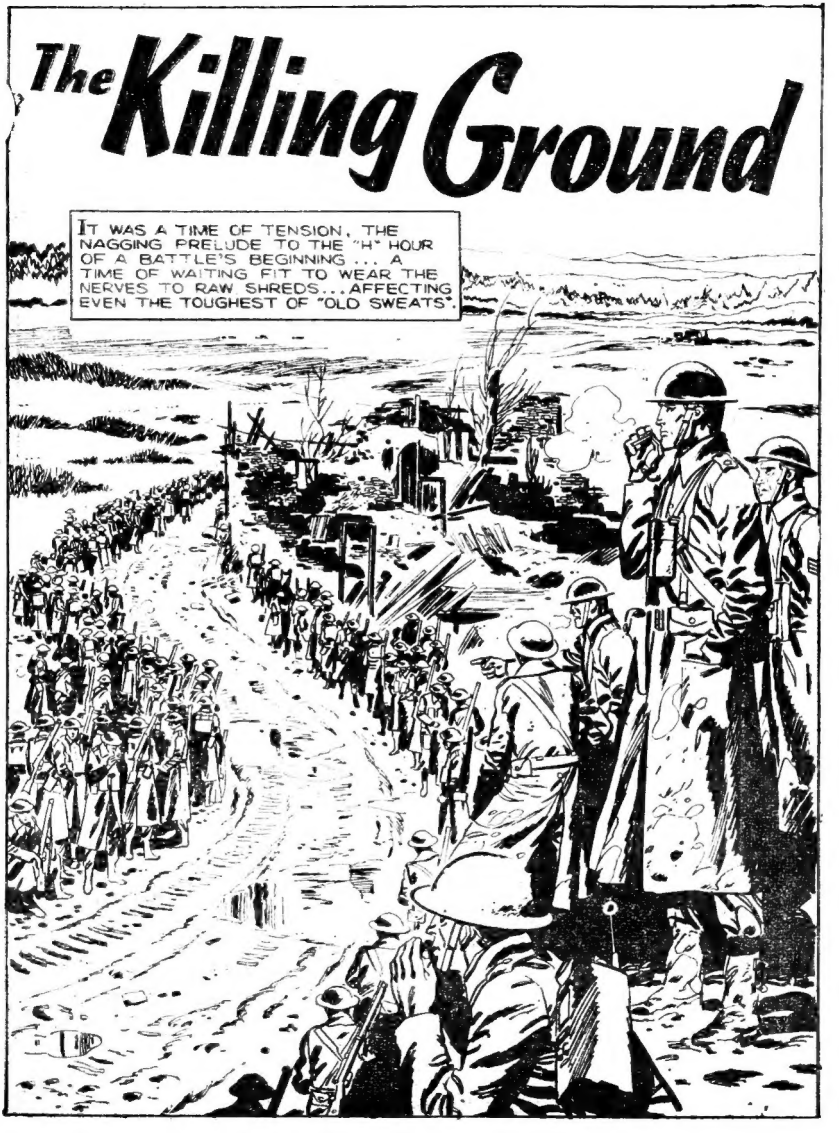

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Chapter 1. RIVER CROSSING

THE MEN UNDER MAJOR BRUCE HOWARD'S COMMAND WERE TOUGH ALL RIGHT. THEY WERE THE MEN OF "B" COMPANY OF A CRACK BRITISH REGIMENT'S FOURTH BATTALION. THE HARD CORE OF THEM WERE IN THEIR SIXTH WINTER OF THE WAR ...

I WONDER HOW MANY OF THOSE LADS OF MINE WILL ANSWER THE ROLL-CALL WHEN THE ACTION'S OVER.

SUCH WAS THE THOUGHT THAT ALWAYS RAN THROUGH BRUCE HOWARD'S MIND BEFORE HIS COMPANY ENGAGED THE ENEMY.

THIRTY MINUTES TO KILL BEFORE WE MOVE TO THE START-LINE, CAPTAIN BURGESS. LET'S MAKE A FINAL CHECK-UP.

BURGESS WAS HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND ... RISEN FROM THE RANKS, A MARTINET WITH AN ACRID TONGUE AND A PARADE-GROUND MANNER ... A DIFFERENT BREED FROM THE MAJOR, WHO WAS QUIET-SPOKEN TO THE POINT OF GENTLENESS ...
SERGEANT BAXTER, ARE YOU AND THE MEN OF TWELVE PLATOON ALL CLEAR AS TO WHAT WE HAVE TO DO?
PORT THAT RIFLE FOR INSPECTION. COME ON, MAN, SNAP INTO IT!
YES, SIR. MISTER ELVIN GAVE US A DETAILED BRIEFING.

A FLIGHT OF SHELLS PLUMMETED TOWARDS THE ROAD. THEY WERE WIDE OF THE MARK, BUT NEAR ENOUGH FOR THEIR SHOCK TO BE FELT ...
LOOK TO YOUR FRONT! WHAT THE DEVIL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE GOT THE JITTERS!

MAJOR HOWARD GLANCED SIDELONG AT HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND AND WITH DIFFICULTY SUPPRESSED A FROWN ...
ALL RIGHT! IT'LL PASS MUSTER. SEE YOU KEEP IT THAT WAY--AT ALL TIMES!
BURGESS HAD A MAGNIFICENT RECORD AS A SERGEANT-MAJOR. BUT TO ME, HE SEEMS COMPLETELY LACKING IN UNDERSTANDING.

THE BUFFALO AMPHIBIOUS VEHICLES WHICH WERE TO CARRY "B" COMPANY WERE RUMBLING TOWARDS THE DUTCH RIVER THAT WAS TO BE CROSSED. THE LAST OF THEM PASSED THE POINT-SECTION OF "B" COMPANY'S FORWARD PLATOON ...
HEY, YOU CLOT, I CLEANED THAT BREN HALF AN HOUR AGO!
TOO BAD, MATE. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO GIVE IT A GOING-OVER AGAIN, WON'T YOU?

THE IRATE BREN-GUNNER SET TO WORK ON HIS SLIME-COVERED LIGHT MACHINE-GUN, CURSING VOLUBLY. HE STRIPPED IT DOWN AND WAS STILL BUSY WITH IT WHEN BRUCE HOWARD AND BURGESS SHOWED UP . . .
WHAT THE BLAZES DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING ?
ME, SIR ? I'M WIPING THE MUCK OFF THIS BREN, SIR . . .

CAPTAIN DAN BURGESS BLEW HIS TOP . . .
YOU'RE WHAT ? THIS IS A FINE TIME TO BE CARRYING OUT MAINTENANCE ! WHY, YOU BONE-IDLE LAYABOUT, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE LONG BEFORE NOW !
EXCUSE ME, SIR. PRIVATE LINDEN'S NOT TO BLAME.

BURGESS WAS IN NO MOOD TO LISTEN. BUT MAJOR HOWARD WAS. HE INTERVENED, LEARNED THE FACTS AND TOLD LINDEN TO GO ON WITH HIS TASK. LATER, HE HAD A WORD WITH HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND ...
CAPTAIN, YOU'RE TOO DARNED QUICK TO BAWL THE MEN OUT. YOU DON'T KNOW THE LADS IN THIS COMPANY AS I DO ...
MAJOR, MEN ARE THE SAME IN ANY COMPANY. THEY'LL ALWAYS SKIVE IF THEY THINK THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IT.

HOWARD DISAGREED SHARPLY -- THEN DROPPED THE SUBJECT. MEANWHILE, THE SKY WAS DARKENING AND SOON, HE GAVE THE ORDER TO MOVE ...
NOW IT'S TIME TO GET CRACKING, THE OLD BUTTERFLIES IN MY STOMACH HAVE STOPPED ACTING UP. HOW ABOUT YOURS, TOSH ?
THE SAME GOES FOR ME, LINDY.

THE WHOLE COMPANY WAS GLAD TO BE ON THE MARCH. THEY HAD COVERED HALF A MILE WHEN A CURTAIN OF ENEMY SHELLS STRADDLED THE ROAD AHEAD. ANOTHER SALVO SLAMMED DOWN ... AND ANOTHER ...
HOLD IT, MISTER SAUNDERS. GAUGE THE TEMPO OF THAT HARASSING FIRE BEFORE YOU SHOVE ON. NO SENSE IN INVITING CASUALTIES.
NOW AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE THE MAJOR? ALWAYS THINKING OF WHAT'S BEST FOR US, HE IS. I'LL BET BURGESS WOULDN'T CALL A HALT! HE'D WALK US SLAP INTO IT!

SECTION BY SECTION, GROUP BY GROUP, THE COMPANY HOT-FOOTED IT PAST THE DANGER-ZONE AT WELL-JUDGED INTERVALS ...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SERGEANT-MAJOR ROSS?
YES, SIR. A NEAR-MISS, THAT'S ALL!

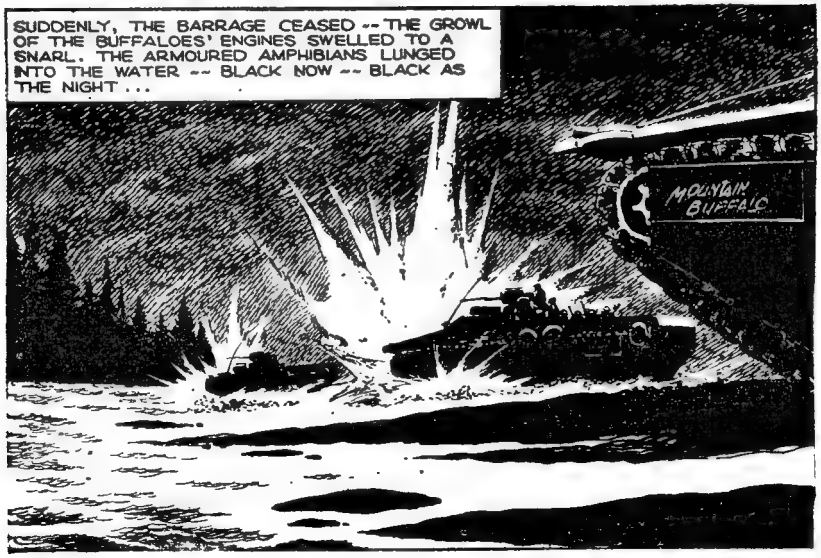
THE NIGHT CLOSED IN. APPROACHING A SHADOWY STRIP OF WOOD, THEY HEARD GUNFIRE AWAY TO THEIR REAR AND THE AIR RUSTLED WITH THE MOMENTUM OF TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER SHELLS DESTINED FOR THE NAZI LINES ...
THERE GOES OUR SUPPORTING BARRAGE. THOSE SHELLS MAKE A COMFORTING SOUND -- WHEN THEY'RE YOUR OWN!

THE FAR EDGE OF THE WOOD WAS THE START-LINE OF THE ATTACK. BEYOND IT, LAY A SPREAD OF WATER, DEEP AND WIDE ... AND BEYOND THAT, MEN CROUCHED, TIGHT-LIPPED ...
THE ENEMY'S STRAFING IS A SURE SIGN WE ARE IN FOR AN ATTACK, HERR HAUPTMANN.
JAWOHL, LEUTNANT, AND WE'LL BEAT IT BACK. THE ENGLANDERS AND THEIR ALLIES WILL NEVER SET FOOT ON THE SOIL OF THE FATHERLAND! NEVER!

WEST OF THE RIVER, CONCEALED IN THE WOOD, THE BUFFALOES HAD KEPT VIGIL -- READY TO DEAL WITH NAZI PATROLS -- UNTIL BRUCE HOWARD AND HIS MEN ARRIVED ...
COME ON, COME ON! HURRY IT UP, THERE! WE HAVEN'T GOT ALL NIGHT!

LADEN TO CAPACITY, THE AMPHIBIANS EDGED FORWARD THROUGH THE THICKETS. THEY WADDLED CLEAR OF THE TREES AND PAUSED TO FORM UP IN LINE-ABREAST ...

BEFORE THEM THE RIVER GLEAMED LURIDLY, MIRRORING THE ERUPTIONS OF THE BRITISH SHELLS THAT WERE BLUDGEONING INTO THE NAZI POSITIONS...
ONE MINUTE TO GO...


SUDDENLY, THE BARRAGE CEASED -- THE GROWL OF THE BUFFALOES' ENGINES SWELLED TO A SNARL. THE ARMOURED AMPHIBIANS LUNGED INTO THE WATER -- BLACK NOW -- BLACK AS THE NIGHT...
MOUNTAIN BUFFALO

THE DARKNESS WAS SO INTENSE THAT DIRECTION WAS HARD TO MAINTAIN ... TILL ALL AT ONCE BRITISH SEARCHLIGHTS BLAZED FROM THE BACK AREA. THEIR BEAMS MET CLOUD AND A REFLECTED GLOW WAS SHED ...
STRAIGHTEN UP, CHUM, STRAIGHTEN UP! WE'RE LOSING CONTACT!
ARE YOU TELLING ME? THANK GOODNESS FOR THAT ARTIFICIAL MOONLIGHT!

ARTIFICIAL MOONLIGHT WAS INDEED A NAVIGATIONAL BOON--YET IT COULD BE A MIXED BLESSING ...
AMPHIBIOUS TANKS! EMERGENCY CALL FOR AN ARTILLERY CONCENTRATION -- SCHNELL!

THE BUFFALOES CAME ON. THE MEN IN THEM WERE IN HIGH FETTLE; EAGER TO CRACK DOWN ON THE FOE, ALL VESTIGE OF TENSION GONE EVEN THOUGH SPANDAU MACHINE-GUNS CHATTERED FROM THE EAST BANK.
QUICK-FIRING POINT-FIVES AND TWENTY-MILLIMETRE CANNONS RAPPED OUT FROM THE BUFFALOES IN HAMMERING RESPONSE
GO IT, MATES! LAY IT ON THICK AND HEAVY!
A BLIZZARD OF LEAD SWEPT THE GERMAN SLITS AND WEAPON-PITS. COAL-SCUTTLE HELMETS BOBBED LOW...
AAARGH!

BREASTING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE WATER, THE BRITISH AMPHIBIANS STILL HAD A FAIR DISTANCE TO GO WHEN A GERMAN BATTERY RANGED ON THEM . . .
LUMME! THAT WAS CLOSE!

THEY WEATHERED THE TEMPEST OF SHRIEKING METAL THAT HURTLED INTO THE RIVER, THOUGH IT THREW THEM OUT OF FORMATION AGAIN. THE ONE PACKED WITH NO. 10 PLATOON WAS THE FIRST ASHORE . . .

IT HAD SCARCELY REACHED DRY LAND WHEN IT WAS JOLTED TO A STANDSTILL BY A DIRECT HIT... NOT FROM AN. ARTILLERY-SHELL ...
THIS IS THE ANSWER TO ENEMY ARMOUR, COMRADE ! THE PANZERFAUST !

PANZERFAUST ! IT WAS A CLOSE-RANGE ANTI-TANK WEAPON OF THE GERMAN INFANTRY. TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH, THE WORD MEANT MAILED FIST... A MAILED FIST WITH A LETHAL PUNCH !
BALE OUT, EVERYBODY ! WE'RE BREWING UP !

MEN SPILLED FROM THE STRICKEN BUFFALO. LINDEN WAS FOREMOST. IT WAS HE WHO AVENGED THOSE WHO HAD DIED IN THE BLAST OF THE PANZERFAUST'S BOMB ...
GOOD WORK, LINDEN !

LIEUTENANT SAUNDERS, IN COMMAND OF NO.10 PLATOON, LED A HEADLONG RUSH INTO THE HEART OF THE GERMAN POSITIONS. GREY-CLAD SHAPES ROSE MENACINGLY TO MEET THAT RUSH ...

THEY MET IT WITH BULLET, BAYONET, STICK-GRENADE -- MATCHING THE FURY OF THE BRITISH PLATOON'S ONSET...
GET STUCK INTO 'EM, LADS!

SAUNDERS AND HIS MEN THRUST ONWARD IN THE FACE OF DESPERATE RESISTANCE. MEANWHILE, THE OTHER IRONCLADS WERE DISGORGING THE REST OF "B" COMPANY ON TO THE OBJECTIVE ...

THERE WAS NO HOLDING THE BRITISH THEN. THEY RAMPAGED OVER THE ENEMY POSITIONS, DRIVING THE DEFENDERS BEFORE THEM. A PANIC STAMPEDE BEGAN AMONG THE NAZIS.
ABOUT-FACE, YOU! COWARDLY DOGS! STAND FIRM AND FIGHT!

THE GERMAN OFFICER WAS OVERWHELMED AND BORNE DOWN. JACKBOOTS TRAMPLED HIM AS HE ROLLED IN THE DIRT...

BOILING WITH RAGE, HE SCRAMBLED TO HIS FEET-- BROUGHT UP A LUGER IN HIS FIST AS HE LAID EYES ON A TALL FIGURE IN KHAKI. IT WAS THE FIGURE OF BRUCE HOWARD, REVOLVER AT THE READY...
DIE, PIG OF AN ENGLANDER!

THE HAMMER OF BRUCE HOWARD'S THIRTY-EIGHT CLICKED INEFFECTUALLY! THE LUGER JETTED FLAME!
I'VE HAD IT, BY THUNDER! MY REVOLVER'S JAMMED!
THE RANGE WAS ALMOST POINT-BLANK, BUT THE BRITISH MAJOR'S LUCK WAS IN. THE LUGER'S SLUG SPANGED OFF HIS HELMET. THEN ...
AAARGH!
BRUCE THREW AN APPRECIATIVE GLANCE AT BURGESS WHO HAD PROVIDENTIALLY INTERVENED ...
THANKS, CAPTAIN.
YOU'LL PROBABLY DO MUCH THE SAME FOR ME, SIR, BEFORE WE'RE THROUGH FIGHTING JERRIES.

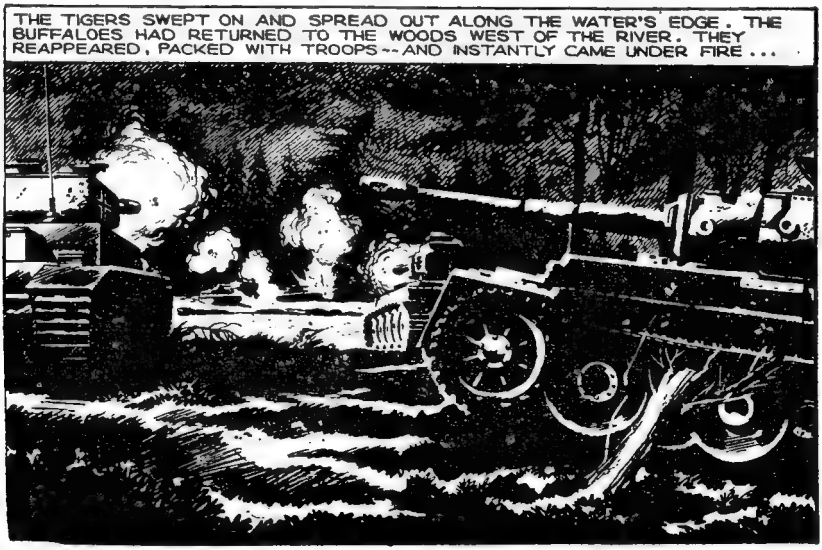
THERE WAS STILL FIGHTING TO BE DONE, THOUGH IT ONLY AMOUNTED TO MOPPING UP ISOLATED POCKETS OF THE ENEMY. BADLY MAULED, MOST OF THE NAZIS WHO HAD SURVIVED THE BRITISH NIGHT-ATTACK WERE ON THE RUN ...
WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER, A HANDFUL OF SULLEN GERMAN PRISONERS WERE PLACED IN THE CHARGE OF THE BUFFALOES' CREWS. THE WOUNDED WERE COLLECTED ...
WHILE WE PUSH ON, YOU FELLOWS WILL EVACUATE THE WOUNDED AND THE PRISONERS AND THEN FERRY THE REST OF THE BATTALION ACROSS.

BRUCE JOINED CAN BURGESS BEYOND THE CAPTURED NAZI POSITIONS. UNDER THE SECOND-IN-COMMAND'S CRITICAL EYE, THE SUBALTERNS HAD REORGANISED THEIR MEN.
ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN BURGESS, LET'S GO. OUR NEXT TASK IS TO SEIZE THAT VILLAGE.
YOU HEARD THE MAJOR. SHAKE OUT INTO OPEN ORDER AND GET CRACKING!

AS THE PLATOON ADVANCED, SPASMODIC FIRE BROKE OUT ON THE FLANKS ...
THE ENEMY'S REACTING ON OUR FLANKS. LET'S HOPE THE BATTALION FOLLOWS UP FAST. IF NOT, WE MAY FIND OURSELVES OUT ON A LIMB.

THE DESULTORY FIRE FROM THE FLANKS DID NOT WORRY "B" COMPANY FOR LONG. IT WAS SWAMPED AS BRITISH ARTILLERY ZEROED ON TO THE NAZI POSITIONS FROM WHICH IT WAS COMING ...
OGEN
1 Km.
SHOULD WE TRY TO MAKE ANOTHER STAND AGAINST THE ENGLANDERS, FELDWEBEL ?
HIMMEL, NO ! WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE !
THE VILLAGE LAY SILENT AND EMPTY WHEN THE MEN UNDER BRUCE HOWARD'S COMMAND CLOSED IN ON IT. FEW OF THEM NOTICED THE NAME ON ITS SIGNBOARD THEN. YET THEY WERE TO REMEMBER IT...
WASHEN
HERTOGEN
THEY WERE TO REMEMBER IT TO THEIR COST... AND TO THEIR SHAME ...

Chapter 2. CUT-OFF



A VOLLEY OF HIGH-VELOCITY SHELLS BLASTED ACROSS THE RIVER ~~ SHELLS TO WHICH THE BUFFALOES HAD NO ANSWER . . . .
JERRY ARMOUR, MAJOR LONSDALE— BANGING AWAY AT US WITH EIGHTY-EIGHTS! WE'RE OUT-GUNNED! WE'D BE MASSACRED IF WE ATTEMPTED THE CROSSING!
YOU'RE RIGHT! THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO BACK OFF!

AS THE BUFFALOES RETREATED INTO THE COVER OF THE THICKETS, A LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CAME HURRYING THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH . . .
THERE'S A COUPLE OF TROOPS OF TIGERS ON THE FAR SIDE, COLONEL MANSFIELD. WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT AS LONG AS THEY'RE SQUATTING THERE.
TIGERS, EH? I'LL PUT THROUGH A CALL FOR ANTI-TANK SUPPORT.

IN HERTOGEN VILLAGE, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE RIVER-CROSSING WAS EFFECTIVELY BLOCKED -- BUT A MORE IMMEDIATE THREAT WAS DEVELOPING. LIEUTENANT SAUNDERS TOOK PROMPT ACTION ...
TAKE UP FIRE POSITIONS! CLANCY! WARN THE MAJOR THAT LORRY-BORNE ENEMY INFANTRY ARE APPROACHING IN STRENGTH!

CLANCY DOUBLED OFF, HIS COMRADES HIT THE FRESHLY-TURNED EARTH IN THEIR HALF-DUG SLITS, ROUGHENED FOREFINGERS APPLYING THE FIRST PRESSURE ON THE TRIGGERS OF THEIR WEAPONS ...
RAPID --- FIRE!

THE WINDSCREEN OF THE LEADING TRUCK DISINTEGRATED IN A SHATTERING HAIL OF METAL. THE LORRY SLEWED WILDLY -- SQUEALED TO A HALT AS A BULLET DRILLED THE DRIVER ...
HIMMEL.. UGH!

THE OTHER TRUCKS PULLED UP AND THEIR OCCUPANTS DIVED OUT OF THEM. IN A FEW MINUTES, AN ATTACK WAS MOUNTED ...
FORWARD! FORWARD!

THE ASSAULT WAS BACKED UP BY A FEROCIOUS COVERING-FIRE AND WAS PRESSED TO WITHIN FIFTY YARDS OF THE BRITISH POSITIONS
THIS COULD BE THE FINISH OF TEN PLATOON! WHAT THE DEVIL'S HAPPENED TO CLANCY? HE'S HAD AMPLE TIME TO PASS ON THAT MESSAGE TO MAJOR HOWARD!

THE SITUATION LOOKED CRITICAL FOR SAUNDERS AND HIS MEN. BUT HELP WAS ON THE WAY...
LOOK, MISTER SAUNDERS! THE MAJOR AND CAPTAIN BURGESS ~~ AND A COUPLE OF SECTIONS FROM ELEVEN PLATOON!

CAUGHT IN ENFILADE, THE NAZI ASSAULT-GROUP BUCKLED UNDER A THRASHING FUSILLADE ...

THOSE WHO OUTLIVED THE RAIN OF BULLETS FLED IN DISORDER. PROMPTLY, THE MAIN BODY OF THE ENEMY OPENED UP ON BRUCE'S PARTY...
GO TO GROUND!

THE ACTION SUBSIDED INTO AN EXCHANGE OF SMALL-ARMS' FIRE, INTERMITTENT AND DISJOINTED.
THEY DON'T SEEM TOO KEEN TO ATTACK AGAIN!
DON'T SPEAK TOO SOON. THEY WON'T HOLD OFF FOR LONG WITH THE ODDS IN THEIR FAVOUR.

THE NAZIS' SHOOTING QUICKENED ALL AT ONCE. A SQUAD OF THEM SPRANG TO THEIR FEET...
WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THOSE CHARACTERS ARE UP TO, MAJOR? WHY ARE THEY 'HARING' FOR THAT TRUCK?
I WISH I KNEW!

THE REASON WAS SOON EVIDENT AS SOME OF THE GERMANS GAINED THE HINDMOST LORRY AND BEGAN TO UNLOAD OMINOUS EQUIPMENT...
MAKE FOR THAT DIP IN THE GROUND OVER THERE AND SET UP THE MORTARS IN IT! SCHNELL! SCHNELL!

THE MORTARS WERE SPEEDILY ASSEMBLED, AIMING-MARKS PLANTED, SIGHTS ADJUSTED. A BURST OF BOMBS CHUGGED FROM THE WEAPONS AT HIGH ANGLE...
FEUER!

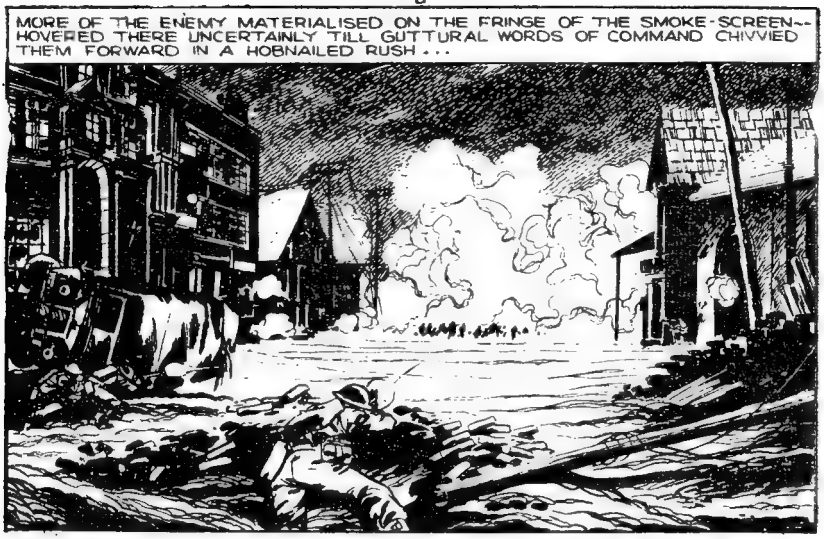
THE BOMBS ARCHED THROUGH THE SKY -- PLUNKED DOWN AND BLOSSOMED FUMES AS THEY DETONATED -- PUNGENT FUMES THAT SPREAD LIKE A BLANKET OF FOG ...
THEY'LL WORK UP UNDER THE CURTAIN OF THEIR SMOKE AND RUSH US IN OVERWHELMING FORCE, MAJOR!
NOT IF WE PULL BACK, THEY WON'T!
THEY BEGAN TO WITHDRAW AND RUNNERS WERE SENT TO DIRECT THE REST OF THE COMPANY TO CONCENTRATE IN THE VILLAGE ...
LET ONE OF THE MEN GIVE THAT CASUALTY A HAND, MAJOR.
I CAN MANAGE HIM, CAPTAIN. YOU GO AHEAD AND PICK OUT A COMMAND POST FOR ME.
HERTOGEN'S SINGLE THOROUGHFARE WAS ALIVE WITH KHAKI-CLAD FIGURES WHEN BRUCE GAVE HIS SUBALTERNS THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.
PLATOON COMMANDERS, I WANT EVERY GROUND-FLOOR WINDOW IN THIS VILLAGE MANNED! COMPANY H.Q. WILL BE IN THAT HOUSE THERE.

THE STREET WAS DENUDED IN NO TIME AND WATCHFUL EYES OBSERVED THE PHANTOM-LIKE SHAPES STALKING INTO VIEW THROUGH THE HAZE...
ON YOUR TOES, MATES! HERE COME SOME OF THE PERISHERS NOW!

WARILY, THE FIRST OF THE GERMANS EMERGED FROM THE SMOKE AND DREW NEARER TO THE VILLAGE...
ACHTUNG! HERR LEUTNANT, THERE'S SOMEONE AT THAT WINDOW!

A SCHMEISSER CHATTERED FRANTICALLY. A CONE OF BULLETS LASHED THROUGH THE WINDOW ...
RIGHT! HERE WE GIVE 'EM THE WORKS!

LINDEN'S BREN STITCHED THE GLOOM IN A LONG, SCYTHING BURST THAT CUT DOWN THE LEADING GERMANS ...


MORE OF THE ENEMY MATERIALISED ON THE FRINGE OF THE SMOKE-SCREEN--HOVERED THERE UNCERTAINLY TILL GUTTURAL WORDS OF COMMAND CHIVVIED THEM FORWARD IN A HOBNAILED RUSH . . .

THE ATTACK RESOLVED ITSELF INTO A THREE-PRONGED EFFORT, WITH THE MAIN WEIGHT OF IT DIRECTED AT THE STREET . . .

THE CENTRAL PRONG OF THE ASSAULT DROVE IN DESPITE STIFF OPPOSITION FROM THE BRITISH MARKSMEN AT HERTOGEN'S EASTERN END. JACKBOOTS POUNDED THE ROADWAY BETWEEN THE OUTERMOST HOUSES ...
THEY'VE BROKEN INTO THE VILLAGE! THEY'RE BULLDOZING THEIR WAY DOWN THE STREET!
YES -- AND NOW THEY'RE FAIRLY IN A TRAP.

THE DEATH-TRAP WAS SPRUNG -- TO FULL EFFECT, FOR EVERY DWELLING WAS A STRONGPOINT.

THE GERMANS MASSED IN THE STREET GAVE WAY AND POURED FROM HERTOGEN IN HEADLONG ROUT, FOLLOWED BY THOSE WHO HAD SWUNG NORTH AND SOUTH AS THEY WERE LASHED BY A SCOURGING FIRE FROM BACK WINDOWS.

THERE FOLLOWED A RESPITE FOR THE DEFENDERS BUT IT DID NOT LAST LONG. THE GERMAN MORTARS ENDED IT... NOT WITH SMOKE-BOMBS, BUT WITH THE SAVAGERY OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE ...
BY HEAVENS! NOW WE'RE IN FOR A SLOGGING! HARMON, SEE IF YOU CAN CONTACT BATTALION H.Q..! FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER -- AND ASK IF ARTILLERY SUPPORT CAN BE LAID ON TO TAKE THE HEAT OFF US!

THE WIRELESS OPERATOR HAD SCARCELY BEGUN TO MAKE HIS CALL WHEN THE COMMAND-POST WAS RIPPED WIDE OPEN BY A MONSTROUS EXPLOSION!

THE ROOF AND UPPER FLOOR VANISHED IN AN EYE-SEARING BLOTCH OF FLAME. THE LOWER WALLS CRACKED ASUNDER, TUMBLING IN A SMOTHER OF DUST....
GREAT GRIEF!

THREE MEN CRAWLED OUT FROM THE WRECKAGE. THEY WERE BRUCE, DAN BURGESS, ROSS. MIRACULOUSLY, THEY HAD ESCAPED WITH ONLY CUTS AND BRUISES . . .
POOR HARMON-- HE'S DEAD . . .
MAYBE HE'S WELL OUT OF IT, SIR. BUT WHAT ABOUT FIXING ON A NEW COMMAND-POST ?
AND HAVE IT FALL AROUND OUR EARS LIKE THIS ONE DID, SERGEANT-MAJOR ? MY ADVICE TO THE COMPANY COMMANDER IS TO STAY PUT.

BRUCE AGREED WITH BURGESS. THEY STAYED THERE WHILE THE MORTARS REDUCED HERTOGEN TO A SHAMBLES. YET CASUALTIES WERE FEW. MOST OF THE DWELLINGS POSSESSED CELLARS THAT HAD AFFORDED SHELTER . . .
THE ENEMY'S LET UP. HE HASN'T GAINED MUCH BY HIS BOMBARDMENT AT THAT-- AS HE'LL DARNED WELL FIND OUT IF HE PUTS IN ANOTHER ATTACK .

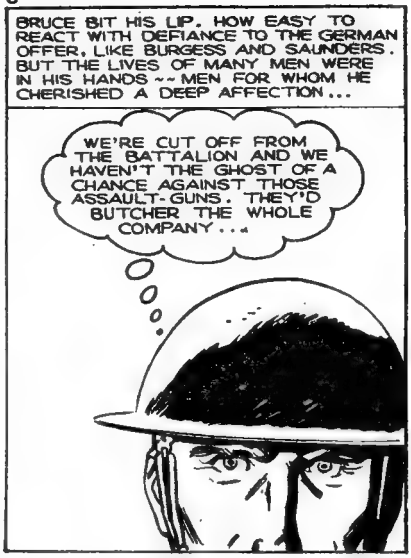
THE NAZIS DID NOT PUT IN ANOTHER ATTACK. HOT REACTIONS TO PATROLS PUSHED OUT BY THEM DISSUADED THEM FROM ANY SUCH VENTURE. IN GOOD HEART, HERTOGEN'S DEFENDERS AWAITED THE DAWN AND THE ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS ...
NO SIGN OF THE BATTALION YET. I WONDER WHAT THE SCORE IS ? THE PLATOON RADIO SETS HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO RAISE A CHEEP
WHAT IS IT, HIGGINS ?
MESSAGE FROM MISTER SAUNDERS, SIR... IT LOOKS AS IF WE'RE REALLY UP AGAINST IT NOW, SIR ...

BRUCE HOWARD AND DAN BURGESS HURRIED TO THE EASTERN END OF THE VILLAGE. THEIR FACES TAUTENED AT WHAT THEY SAW WHEN THEY JOINED LIEUTENANT SAUNDERS ...
ASSAULT-GUNS! I'LL SAY WE'RE UP AGAINST IT! THEY'LL MASSACRE US!

THE ASSAULT-GUNS FANNED OUT AND HALTED, BUT HELD THEIR FIRE. THEN A GERMAN OFFICER ROSE FROM A HOLLOW AND BEGAN TO WALK FORWARD CARRYING A WHITE FLAG...
WHAT'S THIS JOKER WANT?
WE'LL SOON FIND OUT. KEEP YOUR FINGERS OFF YOUR TRIGGERS, MEN! RESPECT THAT FLAG OF TRUCE!

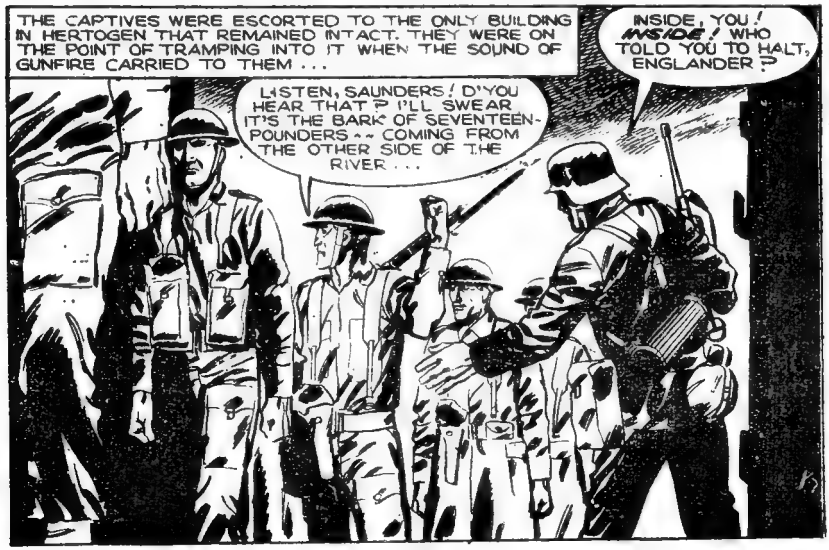
BRUCE, BURGESS AND SAUNDERS STEPPED CLEAR OF THE RUINS. THE NAZI LEUTNANT MARCHED STIFFLY TO WHERE THEY STOOD AND ADDRESSED THEM IN ENGLISH...
FURTHER RESISTANCE WOULD BE USELESS, GENTLEMEN. TO AVOID UNNECESSARY BLOODSHED, MY COMMANDING OFFICER INVITES YOU TO SURRENDER.
IS THAT SO? WELL, YOU TELL YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER TO GO TO BLAZES!
WAIT, CAPTAIN! WAIT!

SAUNDERS GLANCED SHARPLY AT BRUCE. THE MAJOR WAS LOOKING AT THE LONG, MENACING BARRELS OF THE ASSAULT-GUNS. HIS FEATURES WERE DRAWN AND STRAINED . . .
YOU'RE NOT THINKING OF SELLING OUT, SIR! YOU CAN'T DO THAT . . . YOU CAN'T!
THAT'S ENOUGH, LIEUTENANT! I'M NOT ANSWERABLE TO YOU FOR MY DECISIONS . . . OR TO CAPTAIN BURGESS, EITHER!


BRUCE BIT HIS LIP. HOW EASY TO REACT WITH DEFIANCE TO THE GERMAN OFFER, LIKE BURGESS AND SAUNDERS. BUT THE LIVES OF MANY MEN WERE IN HIS HANDS -- MEN FOR WHOM HE CHERISHED A DEEP AFFECTION . . .
WE'RE CUT OFF FROM THE BATTALION AND WE HAVEN'T THE GHOST OF A CHANCE AGAINST THOSE ASSAULT-GUNS. THEY'D BUTCHER THE WHOLE COMPANY . . .

IT WAS HIS CONCERN FOR OTHERS THAT DOMINATED BRUCE HOWARD'S BROODING THOUGHTS. AT LENGTH HE FOUND HIS VOICE, A VOICE CHOKED WITH EMOTION . . .
TELL YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER WE'RE READY TO LAY DOWN OUR ARMS.
JAWOHL!

THE SURRENDER WAS QUICKLY PUT INTO EFFECT. BRUCE COULD SEE HIS MEN WERE BURNED UP WITH BITTERNESS YET HE WAS CONVINCED THEY WOULD ULTIMATELY REALISE HE HAD ACTED SOLELY IN THEIR INTERESTS . . .
MARCH YOUR MEN TO THAT BARN. YOU WILL BE HELD THERE FOR THE PRESENT -- UNTIL I CAN ARRANGE FOR YOUR TRANSFER TO THE REAR.


THE CAPTIVES WERE ESCORTED TO THE ONLY BUILDING IN HERTOGEN THAT REMAINED INTACT. THEY WERE ON THE POINT OF TRAMPING INTO IT WHEN THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE CARRIED TO THEM . . .
LISTEN, SAUNDERS! D'YOU HEAR THAT? I'LL SWEAR IT'S THE BARK OF SEVENTEEN-POUNDERS -- COMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER . . .
INSIDE, YOU! INSIDE! WHO TOLD YOU TO HALT, ENGLANDER?

THE PRISONERS WERE HUSTLED INTO THE BARN, THOUGH NOT BEFORE THEY HAD SEEN THAT THE TIGER TANKS POSTED ALONG THE WATER-BARRIER WERE BEING HEAVILY ENGAGED . . .
Wir kapitulieren nicht!

WHAT THE PRISONERS DID NOT SEE WAS THE CLOBBERING THE IRONCLADS TOOK — FIRST THE TIGERS AND THEN THE ASSAULT-GUNS THAT MOVED FROM HERTOGEN TO JOIN IN THE DUEL . . .
WE HAD TO WAIT LONG ENOUGH FOR THE ANTI-TANK BOYS, BUT THEY'RE DOING A MAGNIFICENT JOB. MAJOR LONSDALE, GET BACK TO WHERE THE BUFFALOES ARE LEAGUERED AND PILE "A" COMPANY ABOARD THEM AGAIN.
RIGHT AWAY, SIR!

THE 17-POUNDERS ANNIHILATED THE GERMAN ARMOUR, THEN CONCENTRATED ON THE FLANKS OF THE BRITISH INFANTRY'S OBJECTIVE -- TO DELUGE NAZI GROUND-TROOPS WITH HIGH EXPLOSIVE AS THE BUFFALOES MADE THE CROSSING.

UNOPPOSED, THE BUFFALOES LANDED "A" COMPANY AND SHUTTLED BACK AND FORTH UNTIL THE ENTIRE BATTALION WAS OVER. BY THAT TIME, THE ENEMY WAS RETIRING ON A WIDE FRONT IN AN ENFORCED TACTICAL WITHDRAWAL . . .
DONNERWETTER! WE FOUGHT FOR THIS ACCURSED VILLAGE TO NO PURPOSE! BACK TO OUR TRUCKS! NEVER MIND THE ENGLANDERS IN THE BARN! WE CAN'T BURDEN OURSELVES WITH PRISONERS!

THE OCCUPANTS OF THE BARN GUESSED WHAT WAS AFOOT FROM THE SHOUTS AND SCURRYING THAT ENSUED. JUBILANT, THEY BURST OUT INTO THE OPEN AS THEIR FORMER CAPTORS WERE DOUBLING FROM THE FAR END OF THE STREET...
AND THERE'S WHY! THE BATTALION'S ON ITS WAY!
THEY'VE SCARPERED, SURE ENOUGH!

THE EX-PRISONERS WERE GATHERED AT THE ENTRANCE TO HERTOGEN WHEN LONSDALE AND HIS COMPANY GAINED THE VILLAGE. LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MANSFIELD ARRIVED THERE SHORTLY AFTERWARDS.
WELL DONE, MAJOR HOWARD! YOU MUST HAVE HAD AN ANXIOUS NIGHT OF IT, BUT I KNEW YOU'D HOLD FIRM IN THE BEST TRADITIONS OF THE REGIMENT...

HIS VOICE DIED OUT. IT HAD DAWNED ON HIM THAT BRUCE AND HIS MEN WERE UNARMED. AS HE SPOKE AGAIN IN A CHANGED TONE, DAN BURGESS STEPPED FORWARD ...
BY GAD, YOU DIDN'T HOLD OUT! YOU SAVE UP! WHY, HOWARD? WHY? DID YOU RUN OUT OF AMMUNITION?
NO, SIR, WHAT WE WERE SHORT OF WAS COURAGE! HOWARD'S LACK OF IT MADE HIM BACK DOWN BEFORE THE JERRIES -- AND LACK OF IT IN THE REST OF US LET HIM DO IT!
BRUCE PROTESTED. HE WAS ABOUT TO EXPLAIN TO THE COLONEL THE REASON FOR HIS SURRENDER WHEN A FLIGHT OF GERMAN SHELLS THUNDERED DOWN ...
DON'T STAND BUNCHED UP THERE! DISPERSE AND TAKE COVER!
THE COLONEL EYED BRUCE NARROWLY ...
HIS MEN'S SAFETY ALWAYS MEANT A LOT TO HOWARD. FAIR ENOUGH. A GOOD PRINCIPLE, BUT HE EVIDENTLY CARRIES IT TO EXCESS. I'LL SEE HE NEVER SPEARHEADS ANOTHER ATTACK BY THIS BATTALION.

Chapter 3. BREAK-THROUGH

THE OPENING WEEKS OF 1945 SAW SOME OF THE BITTEREST FIGHTING OF THE WAR, AS THE BRITISH AND THEIR ALLIES CLAWED THEIR WAY FORWARD AGAINST LAST-DITCH RESISTANCE ...

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT BARRAGE, COLONEL, BUT IT'S NOT STOPPING "C" COMPANY! THEY'RE SHOVING RIGHT INTO IT!

YES -- I'M PROUD TO HAVE SUCH MEN UNDER MY COMMAND.

MANSFIELD'S BATTALION HAD PLAYED A NOTABLE PART IN A PROLONGED, SLUGGING OFFENSIVE WHICH NOW HAD THE GERMAN BORDER FOR ITS GOAL. YET PROGRESS HAD BEEN SLOW...

"C" COMPANY'S TAKING FEARFUL PUNISHMENT, THOUGH! BY THE TIME THEY'RE THROUGH THAT BARRAGE, THEY'LL BE TOO THIN ON THE GROUND TO PRESS THE ASSAULT!

CLEARLY, "C" COMPANY HAD TO BE REINFORCED. THE ADJUTANT OFFERED A TENTATIVE SUGGESTION...
HOW ABOUT THROWING IN "B" COMPANY, SIR? THEY HAVEN'T BEEN IN ACTION FOR WEEKS AND THEY'RE FRESH---
NO! LONSDALE'S THE MAN FOR THIS JOB. GET WORD TO HIM AT ONCE -- AND TELL MAJOR FINLAY OF "D" COMPANY TO STAND BY.

MAJOR LONSDALE AND THE MEN OF "A" COMPANY WERE SENT FORWARD IN SUPPORT. GRIMLY THEY HEADED FOR THE BOILING INFERNO OF THE BOMBARDMENT...
COME ON, LADS! KEEP OPENED OUT AND GO LIKE THE DEVIL!

"C" COMPANY HAD VANISHED INTO THE THICK OF THAT BOMBARDMENT, IN A VALIANT SKIRMISH-LINE THAT WAS BEING RIPPED TO SHREDS. BEYOND THE HOLOCAUST, DUG-IN NAZIS WAITED . . .
NOW TO FINISH THEM, KARL!
JA, WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM!
M.G. 34
WEHRMACHT BULLETS WHIPPED AT THE MEN OF "C" COMPANY WHO HAD OUTLIVED THE BARRAGE. TOO FEW IN NUMBER TO CARRY THEIR OBJECTIVE, THE SCATTERED KHAKI-CLAD GROUPS GROPED FOR COVER...

THEY WERE PINNED DOWN... NOT FOR LONG, THOUGH...
IT'S MAJOR LONSDALE AND HIS COMPANY! ON YOUR FEET! WE'LL FIX THOSE JERRIES YET!

THE BARRAGE HAD TAKEN TOLL OF LONSDALE'S MEN, BUT ENOUGH OF THEM WERE LEFT TO COMBINE WITH THE REMNANTS OF "C" COMPANY IN A BERSERK DASH THAT BROKE INTO THE GERMAN DEFENCES...

THE OBJECTIVE WAS CARRIED. MANSFIELD THEN ORDERED "D" COMPANY TO LEAP-FROG BEYOND IT AND CONTINUE TO ADVANCE ...
CORPORAL, I'M NO HERO BUT I WISH IT WAS OUR MOB THAT WAS GOING FORWARD INSTEAD OF "D" COMPANY. I'M CHEESED OFF WITH BEING IN THE RESERVE.
AREN'T WE ALL, LINDY! WE'VE BEEN LIKE A MOB OF BLOOMING OUTCASTS SINCE MAJOR BLOOMING HOWARD MADE US KNUCKLE UNDER AT HERTOGEN.

THERE WAS A WORD FOR THE PREVAILING MOOD IN "B" COMPANY~~ A SLANG-TERM USED IN THE ARMY TO DESCRIBE A REBELLIOUS FRAME OF MIND ...
"BARBARY"~~ THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE! IF ONLY I COULD WIN BACK THEIR CONFIDENCE AND RESPECT...
Ooo

IN A LITTLE WHILE, A COLUMN OF DISGRUNTLED GERMANS TRUDGED INTO VIEW UNDER ESCORT OF RIFLEMEN FROM "A" COMPANY...
SOME BLOKES HAVE IT CUSHY AND NO MISTAKE!
GET LOST!
WATCH IT, TOSH! THAT'S FIGHTING TALK AND YOU AND YOUR MATES AIN'T FIGHTING SOLDIERS NO MORE...

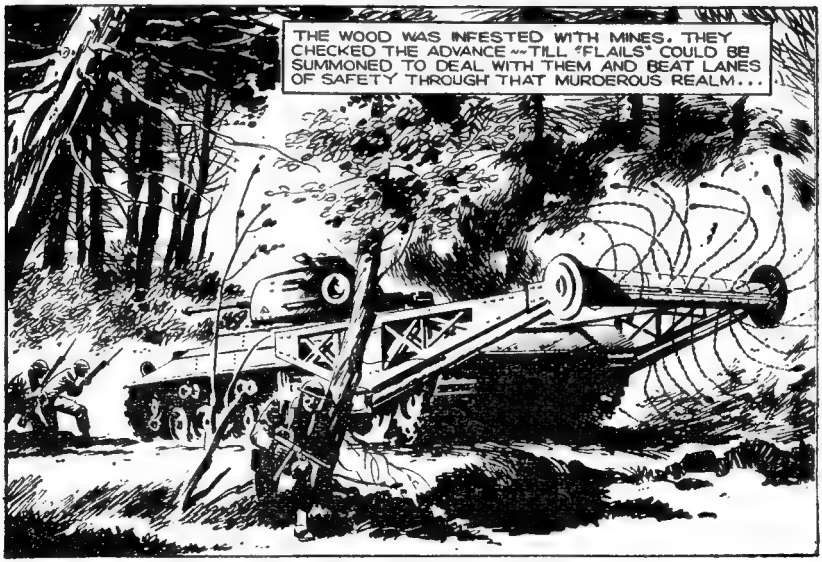
SMIRKING, THE RIFLEMEN OF THE ESCORT MARCHED BY WITH THEIR CHARGES AND HALTED THEM A HUNDRED YARDS FARTHER ON...
WE WERE TOLD TO TURN OVER THESE PRISONERS TO YOU, SIR.

THAT WAS ONE OF "B" COMPANY'S PRINCIPAL ROLES NOW -- THE MENIAL TASK OF PROVIDING FOR THE DISPOSAL OF CAPTURED ENEMY PERSONNEL ...
THE COLONEL SAID YOU'D ARRANGE FOR THEM TO BE TAKEN BACK FOR INTERROGATION, SIR...
VERY WELL. I'LL SEE TO IT.

BEHIND BRUCE, DAN BURGESS AND LIEUTENANT SAUNDERS EXCHANGED BITTER GLANCES ...
I HEAR DIV. H.Q. HAS MOVED UP TO HERTOGEN-- I'VE COME TO LOATHE THE VERY SOUND OF THAT NAME!
IT'S THE NAME OF HOWARD THAT BURNS ME UP! EVERY TIME I LOOK AT HIM, I GET HOT UNDER THE COLLAR!

THE DAYS PASSED...UNEVENTFULLY FOR "B" COMPANY, NOT FOR THE REST OF THE BATTALION. TO LONSDALE AND HIS MEN FELL THE DISTINCTION OF BEING FIRST TO SET FOOT ON GERMAN SOIL ...
WE'RE ON JERRY'S HOME-GROUND AT LAST, MAJOR LONSDALE. THE WAR'S AS GOOD AS OVER.
DON'T BE TOO SURE OF THAT, MISTER HAMILTON. THE NAZIS AREN'T FINISHED YET.

THE GREAT FOREST KNOWN AS THE REICHSWALD LAY BEFORE THEM. ALL WAS TRANQUIL THERE, DECEPTIVELY SO. AMID ITS SHADOWS THE WAR ENDED FOR A SUBALTERN NAMED HAMILTON -- AND FOR MANY OTHERS...
HOLD IT! FOR PETE'S SAKE, HOLD IT!

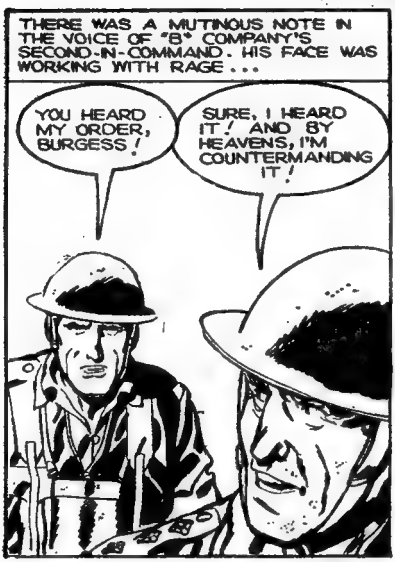

THE WOOD WAS INFESTED WITH MINES. THEY CHECKED THE ADVANCE -- TILL "FLAILS" COULD BE SUMMONED TO DEAL WITH THEM AND BEAT LANES OF SAFETY THROUGH THAT MURDEROUS REALM...

THE REICHSWALD SWALLOWED "A" COMPANY, THEN "D" COMPANY AND WHAT WAS LEFT OF "C" COMPANY. THE COLONEL FOLLOWED WITH HIS H.Q. GROUP. NEXT CAME "B" COMPANY...
THE MINED AREA EXTENDS A HUNDRED YARDS INTO THE WOOD, MAJOR. TAPES HAVE BEEN LAID NOW, THOUGH. YOU'LL ALL BE OKAY IF YOU STICK INSIDE 'EM.
GOOD. TIP OFF OUR BATTALION MORTAR-PLATOON, WILL YOU? THEY'RE ABOUT HALF-A-MILE TO OUR REAR.

SOMEWHERE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE WOOD, HEAVY FIRING BROKE OUT, DOMINATED BY THE FAMILIAR CRUMP OF MORTAR-BOMBS. A RUNNER APPEARED ...
MESSAGE FROM THE COLONEL, SIR! THE ENEMY'S PUT IN AN ATTACK! 'C' COMPANY'S BEEN OVERRUN! YOU'RE TO TAKE UP DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND CHECK THE BREAK-THROUGH AT ALL COSTS!

FLASHES BELLIED SUDDENLY AMONG THE TREES AHEAD, MARKING THE RELENTLESS APPROACH OF A CREEPING BARRAGE ...
WE'RE PACKED IN TOO TIGHT FOR COMFORT HERE! BEFORE THAT MORTAR-FIRE GETS ANY CLOSER, WE'D BETTER MOVE ON OUT OF THESE TAPED 'LANES' AND DEPLOY THE MEN IN FRONT OF 'EM!
IN FRONT OF THEM? NO!

BRUCE HAD MADE HIS OWN SWIFT APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION. HE SHOUTED AN ORDER THAT BROUGHT INSTANT AND VIOLENT REACTION FROM BURGESS...
PULL BACK OUT OF THE WOOD!
PULL BACK! WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU PLAYING AT, HOWARD? WE'VE AN ENEMY BREAK-THROUGH TO COPE WITH!


THERE WAS A MUTINOUS NOTE IN THE VOICE OF "B" COMPANY'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND. HIS FACE WAS WORKING WITH RAGE...
YOU HEARD MY ORDER, BURGESS!
SURE, I HEARD IT! AND BY HEAVENS, I'M COUNTERMANDING IT!

THE CAPTAIN WHEELED ROUND. HIS VOICE BARKED OUT THROUGH THE TUMULT OF THE BOMBS THAT WERE PLUMMETING STEADILY CLOSER...
WE'RE NOT PULLING BACK! NOT DARNED LIKELY! WE'VE A FIGHT ON OUR HANDS AND WE'RE GOING TO HIT THE ENEMY FOR SIX! COME ON!

THE MEN RAISED A CHEER AND STARTED FORWARD. FURIOUSLY BRUCE CLUTCHED AT DAN BURGESS WITH HIS LEFT HAND AND BUNCHED THE KNUCKLES OF HIS RIGHT...
WHY, YOU...

THE BLOW WAS NEVER DELIVERED. A BOMB PLUNGED INTO THE UPPER BOUGHS OF A NEARBY TREE ~~ BURST WITH A MONSTROUS CONCUSSION ...
AAARGH!

THEY'VE BOUGHT IT! ALL THREE OF 'EM!

BUT BRUCE AND BURGESS HAD SURVIVED. THE COMPANY COMMANDER CLIMBED TO HIS FEET UNHURT. BURGESS STRUGGLED TO HIS KNEES, DAZED BUT WITHOUT A MARK ON HIM ...
GET BACK, CONFOUND YOU! GET BACK, DO AS I TELL YOU!

THIS WAS NO LONGER THE QUIET-SPOKEN OFFICER HIS MEN HAD KNOWN; BY SHEER LUNG-POWER HE CHECKED THEM. THEY HALTED RELUCTANTLY, THOUGH ...
YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT ALL RIGHT, I PROMISE YOU / TO THE LAST MAN AND THE LAST ROUND, IF NEED BE / BUT AS LONG AS I'M ALIVE YOU'LL FIGHT UNDER MY COMMAND AND NOBODY ELSE'S! NOW GET CLEAR OF THIS WOOD!

THE COMPANY RETREATED WESTWARD. BRUCE PAUSED TO GIVE BURGESS A HAND...
PLATOON COMMANDERS, THERE'S A STREAM TWO HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE FOREST. WE'LL TAKE UP A POSITION IN IT — AND WE'LL HALT THE BATTALION MORTARS THERE AS WELL WHEN THEY SHOW UP!

BEFORE LONG, THE GERMAN BOMBS CEASED TO FALL. S-S TROOPS HAD BEEN TRACKING THROUGH THE WOOD BEHIND THE CREEPING BARRAGE. SHREWDLY, THEY FUNNELLED INTO THE "LANES" THE BRITISH FLAIL-TANKS HAD CLEARED...
CAREFUL! IT'S KAPUT FOR ANY MAN WHO PUTS A FOOT WRONG!

THE LANES ENSURED SAFE-PASSAGE FOR THE NAZIS THROUGH THE AREA THEIR SAPPERS HAD MINED. BUT, OF NECESSITY, THEY WERE IN CLOSE-RANKED FORMATIONS WHEN THEY REACHED THE FOREST'S EDGE ...
THEY'RE ALL YOURS, LADS! LET 'EM HAVE IT!
THE MEN OF "B" COMPANY CUT LOOSE AT THEIR TARGETS AND THE FOREFRONT OF EACH ENEMY COLUMN DISSOLVED IN A CONFUSION OF WRITHING BODIES ...

THE GERMAN CASUALTIES PILED UP. BEHIND THEM, THEIR COMRADES DUCKED LOW TO USE THEM AS A SHIELD. THAT WAS WHEN BRUCE CALLED ON THE BATTALION MORTARMEN...
OKAY! YOU'RE IN BUSINESS! GO TO IT!
THE THREE-INCH MORTARS WENT INTO ACTION, COUGHING OUT SALVO AFTER SALVO. THE BOMBS EXPLODED WITH MAXIMUM EFFECT--ABOVE THE NAZIS, NOT AT GROUND-LEVEL...
TREE BURSTS, CAPTAIN BURGESS! AN INFANTRYMAN'S NIGHTMARE! AND THAT'S WHAT THE HUN WOULD HAVE DISHED OUT TO US IF WE'D STAYED IN THE FOREST! AS IT WAS, YOU AND I HAD A BRIEF SAMPLE!

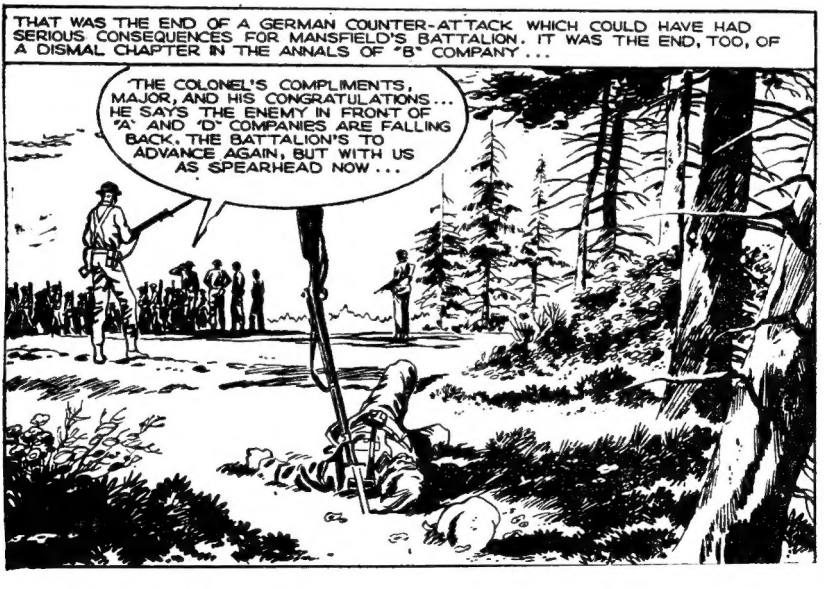
IN FULL POSSESSION OF HIS WITS AGAIN, BURGESS COULD APPRECIATE HIS COMPANY COMMANDER'S SENSE OF STRATEGY NOW ...
HOWARD'S RIGHT. HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING WHEN HE GAVE THE ORDER TO PULL BACK INTO THE OPEN. ONLY, I WAS TOO MIXED UP TO SEE IT...

THE ODDS HAD BEEN HEAVILY IN FAVOUR OF THE GERMANS. "B" COMPANY BULLETS HAD SHORTENED THOSE ODDS. WHITE-HOT CHUNKS OF METAL AND SLIVERS OF TIMBER SHORTENED THEM STILL MORE, IN THE KILLING GROUND OF THE FOREST.

YET THE ENEMY'S WILL TO FIGHT HAD NOT BEEN ENTIRELY OBLITERATED WHEN THE BOMBARDMENT ENDED. SHOTS RANG OUT ALONG THE FOREST'S EDGE AS BRUCE LED HIS MEN IN A SORTIE FROM THE STREAM ...
AH! I'VE COPPED ONE!
ALL RIGHT, LINDEN! LET'S HAVE THAT BREN!

WITH THE BREN IN HIS GRASP, THE COMPANY COMMANDER RACED ON, HAMMERING FROM HIP-LEVEL AT A SPANDAU IN FRONT OF HIM ...
KAMERAD! KAMERAD!

THE CRY OF "KAMERAD" SWELLED INTO A HIGH-PITCHED FRIGHTENED CHORUS. AT ALL POINTS, THE NAZIS SPILLED FROM THE WOOD WITH HANDS HELD HIGH . . .
MISTER SAUNDERS, I WANT YOU TO MAKE CONTACT WITH COLONEL MANSFIELD AND REPORT THAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED OUR TASK. BETTER TAKE A PATROL WITH YOU.


THAT WAS THE END OF A GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK WHICH COULD HAVE HAD SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR MANSFIELD'S BATTALION. IT WAS THE END, TOO, OF A DISMAL CHAPTER IN THE ANNALS OF "B" COMPANY . . .
THE COLONEL'S COMPLIMENTS, MAJOR, AND HIS CONGRATULATIONS . . . HE SAYS THE ENEMY IN FRONT OF "A" AND "D" COMPANIES ARE FALLING BACK. THE BATTALION'S TO ADVANCE AGAIN, BUT WITH US AS SPEARHEAD NOW . . .

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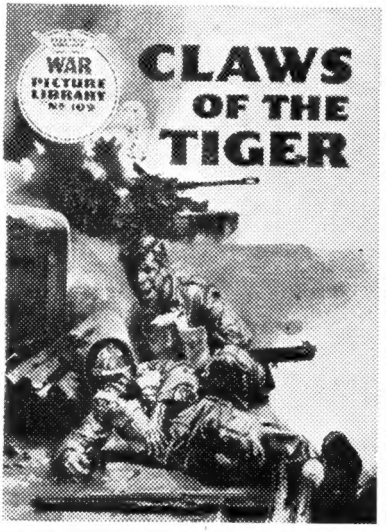

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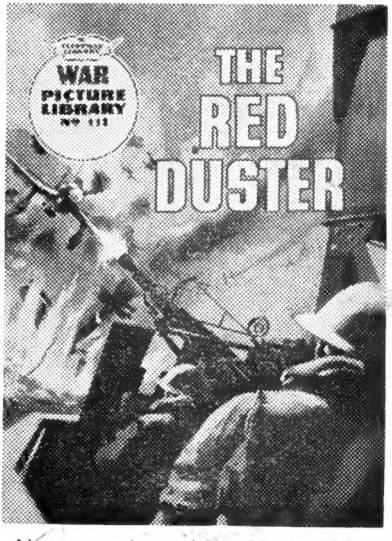

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